

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 INR-07 L-02 ACDA-05

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0987

INFO SECDEF

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USCINCEUR

USNMR SHAPE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, MILI, PARM, UK, NATO

SUBJECT: 1975 DEFENSE ESTIMATES VOTED

1. THE WILSON GOVERNMENT'S DEFENSE PROGRAM -- PRODUCT OF A YEAR-LONG REVIEW OF BRITAIN'S DEFENSE COMMITMENTS, FORCE DEPLOYMENTS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS -- WAS APPROVED BY THE COMMONS ON MAY 7 OVER STRENUOUS TORY OBJECTIONS AND AFTER A MINI-REVOLT BY LABOR'S LEFT WING. GOVERNMENT HAD A COMFORTABLE 40 VOTE MAJORITY ON BILL (WHICH CALLS FOR EXPENDITURE OF 3,690 MILLION POUNDS IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FY 1976); EARLIER AMMENDMENT BY TRIBUNE GROUP ON LABOR'S

LEFT WING, DEPLORING THE HIGH LEVEL OF PROJECTED DEFENSE SPENDING AND CALLING FOR REJECTION OF THE ESTIMATES, WAS DEFEATED BY A VOTE OF 489 TO 57. MOST REBELLIOUS TRIBUNITES REJOINED THE GOVERNMENT RANKS IN THE FINAL VOTE.

2. DEBATE ON MAY 6 AND 7 FOLLOWED A PREDICTABLE COURSE, WITH TORY SPOKESMAN ATTACKING THE RATIONAL BASIS OF THE DEFENSE REVIEW (IN WHICH, THEY CHARGED, THE NEED TO MAKE FINANCIAL CONCESSIONS TO THE LABOR LEFT WAS GIVEN MORE ATTENTION THAN THE THREATS TO BRITAIN AND NATO). LABOR SPEAKERS EMPHASIZED NEED TO BALANCE MILITARY PREPAREDNESS WITH SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS IN BRITAIN. TORIES DEPLORED REDUCTIONS ON NATO FLANKS WHILE GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN STRESSED THE NEED TO HOLD FIRM IN CENTRAL REGION AND OTHERWISE TO CONCENTRATE ON AREAS WHERE BRITAIN HAS UNIQUE CAPABILITY OR EXPERIENCE. DOMESTIC ASPECTS OF DEFENSE SPENDING (I.E. RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND JOBS) WAS ALWAYS AT OR NEAR SURFACE DURING EXCHANGES.

3. COMMENT. WITH APPROVAL OF DEFENSE PROGRAM AT LAST SECURED, DEFENSE SECRETARY MASON AND HIS COLLEAGUES CAN BEGIN TO CONCENTRATE ON IMPLEMENTING PROGRAM AND PRESSING FORWARD IN AREAS LIKE NATO COMMON PROCUREMENT AND FORCE RATIONALIZATION WHICH THEY FEEL ARE VITAL FOR LONG-TERM NORTH ATLANTIC DEFENSE. BRITISH EFFORTS TO MOBILIZE SUPPORT IN EURO GROUP ON THESE MATTERS (LONDON 7030) MAY BE THE OPENING SHOTS IN THIS CAMPAIGN.

RICHARDSON

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